

The 3 Peaks of Leadership

We believe that most leadership development programmes are fundamentally flawed. The vast majority of them only focus on what we describe as Operational Fitness whilst ignoring the other significant areas of a leader's life.

Interestingly, we are not alone in coming to this conclusion. Stewart Friedman, from the University of Pennsylvania, in his new book, Total Leadership, has come to startlingly similar conclusions. He champions the idea of, "Bringing the whole person to work", and suggests that organizations can improve business results by enriching the lives of employees and leaders. Amongst other things, he advocates increasing exercise to reduce stress-related illnesses and executive burnout.

We agree with Friedman. Leadership development programmes should be concerned with enriching all areas of a person's life, which is why we have designed a new concept in leadership development. Underpinned by the principles of Authentic Leadership, the 3 Peaks Leadership Development Programme is a unique integration of the 3 factors that are critical to being an exceptional leader: Physical Fitness, Cognitive Fitness, and Operational Fitness.

- Physical Fitness is the effective management of your body's stamina and energy.
- Cognitive Fitness is mental resourcefulness and flexibility; thinking in the right ways at the right time.
- Operational Fitness is the consistent delivery of extraordinary results in both the short and longer terms.

We have combined these 3 factors as essential to sustained leadership success because:

1. Without being Physically Fit, leaders are not able to manage their energy levels effectively throughout the days and weeks and months of sustained expectations at work. Research shows that they take more time off sick, find it more difficult to cope with stressful situations, and are at higher risk of type 2 diabetes, heart attacks and raised blood pressure.
2. Without being Cognitively Fit, leaders and managers are in danger of 'flabby thinking'. They make unnecessary mistakes and aren't as flexible in their thinking as they need to be. Their problem solving skills are often limited and they fail to learn from their colleagues.
3. Without being Operationally Fit, leaders simply don't get the job done. They don't mobilize their resources effectively and are often out of balance regarding the focus between their task and people priorities. They frequently make the mistake of sacrificing longer term success for short term gains and they may be promoted more slowly than their colleagues.

But is increasing self-awareness by combining the 3 factors of Cognitive, Operational and Physical Fitness enough to guarantee leadership success? We would argue that it is not. Self-aware leaders are undoubtedly more successful than their less aware counterparts. However, self-awareness is no guarantee of fairness, honesty, integrity or ethical decision making. This is why the principles of Authentic Leadership underpin all elements of the 3 Peaks Leadership Development Programme.

Authentic leaders are characterised by their integrity; they have a higher ethical and moral capacity than other leaders. They do what is right because it is the right thing to do, not for any personal, political or operational gain. They look at situations from all angles, taking everyone's perspective into account and are liked and trusted by their colleagues and followers as a result. Organisations that are lead by authentic leaders consistently out-perform the competition.

